

## **A Living Faith: Surrender To The Camino**

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1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Jackie's life was organized and she had a plan. Perhaps you know people like her. She was recently married, worked as a teacher, and her husband was a law student. In her mind, she drew a picture of their perfect life. She would teach until her husband Conor finished law school and was offered a job.

Then, they would move to wherever his job took them, they would live in a fabulous city where his income would allow freedom to have everything they ever wanted, and she would be able to open her dream restaurant. This plan expanded with all her siblings moving to wherever she and Conor landed to have family close by.

In addition, at just the right time, they would have magical and beautiful babies who would never cry and whose diapers never needed to be changed! Pretty reasonable, wouldn't you say?

This was how she planned her future, but one year after getting married, it was very clear that

Conor wasn't at all happy at law school and needed to make a change. So went the life she had imagined.

Jackie's life plan fell apart before it even got started and left her in an insecure downward spiral of doubt and worry. She had no idea what their future might look like.

As she reflected on her situation, she discovered two flaws in her thinking.

#1 She had been thinking only in terms "I, NOT WE"

#2 She was thinking selfishly about HER plan, not GOD'S plan.

As she contemplated how lost she and Conor felt, she began to consider doing something she had thought about years before — hiking the Camino de Santiago, a 500-mile trek across northern Spain, often used to stimulate the inner spiritual journey for thousands of people.

Jackie went right into planning control mode: They would take a year off, live with friends, eat great international food, discover their purpose in life, and come back fulfilled, with laser life focus, ready to build a new life.

Boy it's hard to let go of the "plans" that WE want to make.

Jackie and Conor caught themselves this time and figured that they would relax their control and instead put their lives in God's hands, remaining open by surrendering to the Camino de Santiago.

Jackie said, *"As reluctant as I was to give up the reigns, I knew life would be so much better if I stopped trying to control it."*

She prayed to be able to trust God with everything, which is a back-and-forth process, taking control and then letting go, then taking it again, etc.

The journey along the Camino began well, but a couple of weeks in there rose doubts and frustrations and the two of them were not only geographically lost, but felt lost inwardly as well. They were looking for any sort of sign that might lead them onto a good path.

Just then a biker stopped and asked them if they were looking for "the way."

Jackie felt this question run deep within her. She and Conor were not only alone and lost on the Camino path, but also they had

lost their sense of faith in God, and their life direction. It felt as though their lives were also void of meaning.

The key to get unstuck was allowing themselves to be vulnerable and open

Not only did the biker help them find their way back onto the Camino path where they joined the company of other supportive backpackers, but by being vulnerable and embracing how lost they were, they began moving forward around the other questions that had them unsettled.

The biggest challenge for Jackie was to surrender the idea of being in control and having everything figured out.

Once Jackie resolved to let go, she actually became comforted by knowing that she was not in control. She no longer had to expend all the energy it took to direct everything according to her plan.

Jackie and Conor still don't have life figured out, but they are learning to trust in God day by day, and step by step.

Jackie said *"We don't need to know tomorrow's walk, we just*

*need to trust and listen during the walk today.”*

She and Conor continue to learn life lessons from their Camino trek. There is a saying among those hiking the Camino “As in the Camino, so in life.”

Jackie now talks about how beauty, peace, and joy are birthed out of surrendering. What a shift!

Let’s hear what the a man named Paul wrote to a group of churches in the city of Corinth in the first century.

### **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13**

These words are part of a longer passage that is very often read during weddings. It talks about love being patient and kind and generous. The Bible often refers to love as being central to God’s plan for the world and for our lives. If we run everything we do through the filter of love, we are certainly going in the right direction.

This passage also talks about the limits of our awareness, of our knowledge, of our vision. At any point, on any given day, we have a limited range of view. We cannot see the future, next year, next month or often even tomorrow — just like Jackie and Conor.

Our faith is like this. We walk around living life without even noticing that God is always working for our benefit, always present in our pain, always comforting us through other people when we are lonely and hurt, always inspiring us when we are left empty. In fact, we may not see God’s presence anywhere in our world.

Then one day our eyes are opened, perhaps for the first time and we see God’s mercy, grace, and love at a new and deeper level all around us and within us.

Now we only see in part. But one day we will see completely the power of God’s love for us and for this community.

Until then, we hold grace and forgiveness for one another and ourselves because we all are doing the best we can with what we see and understand right now. In fact, none of us can do any more.

This past week, our Unstuck Team and Church Council got together for two days with a group of four people who are helping us to better communicate about who we are as a congregation. We shared with them about who we are as a community and the vision God is giving us. We shared as best we could with what we now see.

None of us can see what this church's ministry will look like in the coming days and years. Our vision is limited. But this doesn't need to stop us.

Just like Jackie needed to surrender to the Camino de Santiago, we also need to surrender our own vision, and seek God's vision for our future.

This will mean recognizing how the personal wants can get in the way of our church growing.

What I know for sure is that the more we are able to let go of what we personally want for ourselves, redirecting our attention on the much bigger vision that God is giving us, the more clear our steps ahead will become, the more meaningful it will be, and the more actions we can take in sync with God's heart for us.

We desire for everything that we do to fit inside God's vision for this church.

Here's one recent example. This past Tuesday morning we had some people from an electric firm doing some work around the church. I was so very excited about this, not just because some new plugs were installed and light fixtures converted to LEDs. That

would be simply taking care of building maintenance.

No, I was excited because the electrical projects were selected in order to serve the bigger vision that God is giving us. We want young families to feel at home here and so we now have plugs to install digital bulletin boards for announcements, notices and any variety of other things in the Welcome Center and just inside the north entrance.

We also have enclosed loose wires and installed better lighting in the stairs coming up from the Fellowship Hall into the lobby at the back of the sanctuary, because this is a better way to enter worship especially for new people.

Electrical work is much more than electrical work!

All of this and more is being done to make our building and our community more accessible, and more hospitable for new people who are currently not among us.

The more we are focused on seeing God's vision beyond our own personal wants, the more that we will find actions to take to build this congregation. This is stuff that we are sorting out on our "Camino trek" into the future.